Lesson Plan for Openly Straight by Bill Konigsberg

Writing activity about labels and how they make you feel.

The main character in this story, Rafe, has a writing teacher with who he shares a personal journal. The teacher gives him feedback in his journal on how to improve his writing.

One of the themes in the book is about labels and how they make you feel.

The teacher gives Rafe a writing assignment to free write.

For this activity have each student pick a label that they feel they have. Some examples could include jock, nerd, band geek etc. The students will make some suggestions about common labels and the teacher can write them on the board. Have each student pick one label, either from the board or one of their own choosing. Then each student should do a free write about how this label makes them feel. Explain to the students that during a free write they don’t need to worry about spelling or grammar. They important idea is to get their ideas down on paper without focusing on the writing process.

After the free write have the students look at the following passage from the book:

“It’s hard to be different,”......”And perhaps the best answer is not to tolerate difference, not even to accept them. But to celebrate them. Maybe then those who are different would feel more loved, and less, well, tolerated.”

Now with the above passage in mind assign the students to expand on their free write activity and explain what their label would be like if it were tolerated, accepted and celebrated. Write a separate paragraph for each tolerate, accepted and celebrated. For the second part of this assignment don’t limit time. This part of the assignment should be done over a few days. Have students share their work. Before they share their work tell students the classroom is a safe place to share their work.